



How to be a Cluster 3 NCP


Newcomers' Guide



Table of Contents

03	INTRODUCTION
04	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
05	ESSENTIAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION
06	1. WHAT ARE NCPs?
08	2. AN INTRODUCTION TO HORIZON EUROPE
14	3. CLUSTER 3: CIVIL SECURITY FOR SOCIETY
18	4. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF THE CL3 NCP DAILY WORK
23	5. SEREN5 TOOLS AND SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This Newcomers' Guide has been prepared under the EU-funded **SEREN5**  project (SEcurity REsearch NCPs network 5: Work Package 2, Task 2.2: Newcomers NCPs' Info set). This Guide is just one of the many tools and services available to Cluster 3 (CL3) National Contact Points (NCPs) through SEREN5 to support them in their day-to-day work (see chapter 5: SEREN5 Tools and Services).

SEREN5 is the International Network of Horizon Europe CL3 NCPs, and one of its major objectives is to improve and professionalise the skills of the CL3 NCPs across Europe. The cascading effects of the activities developed by the project will ultimately support applicants themselves, with the final aim of improving the quality of proposals submitted in Horizon Europe, specifically in CL3.

Indeed, the present Guide aims to provide newly appointed CL3 NCPs with specific information and tips about this particular role, equipping them with a set of main guiding principles, recommendations, and concrete suggestions for their daily work.

A few words about SEREN5

SEREN5 aims to provide the CL3 NCP community with new knowledge, skills and competences, and a comprehensive suite of tools for their day-to-day job. These are important elements in reaching out to the multicultural and multi-disciplinary environment that characterises CL3, and in effectively supporting its broad-based constituency.

Therefore, the project is based on three complementary pillars: (i) NCP capacity building and competence development, (ii) development of targeted and high quality services (events and tools) for CL3 applicants and stakeholders, and (iii) CL3 community building and general mainstreaming of Cluster 3 NCPs in Horizon Europe.

SEREN5 is coordinated by the Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE, Italy) and consists of 15 beneficiaries and 1 associated partner, representing all levels of NCP experience. For any general questions related to the project, feel free to contact us via e-mail: contact@seren-project.eu.

Acknowledgments

The Guide has been prepared by Dr. Ioannis Theodorou, CL3 NCP for Cyprus at the Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF) and T2.2 leader, with contributions from Flavia La Colla (APRE, Italy) and Mark Meilak (MCST, Malta)

Visit SEREN5's website



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List of abbreviations

AC	Associated Country
CL3	Cluster 3
DG	Directorate General
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration & Home Affairs
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
EC	European Commission
EIC	European Innovation Council
EIE	European Innovation Ecosystems
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
ERA	European Research Area
ERC	European Research Council
EU	European Union
KSO	Key Strategic Orientation
MS	Member State
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions
NCP	National Contact Point
PC	Programme Committee
R&I	Research and Innovation
SEREN5	SEcurity REsearch NCPs network 5
TC	Third Country

Legend



Website



Document



Presentation slides
(e.g. ppt, pdf)



Recording
(e.g. webinar, infoday)



Online Course

Essential Sources of Information

The following websites represent the most essential sources of information in a CL3 NCP's day-to-day work. In the following chapters of this guide, you will find links to several useful documents, recordings and other material hosted in these websites.

[Horizon Europe website](#)

The EC'S official website provides essential information on the framework programme and its structure, available funding opportunities, and links to relevant policy information. It also publishes news about the programme, and events organized by the EC or its agencies.


[Funding and tender opportunities portal](#)

This is the “entry point” to all funding programmes of the EC, including Horizon Europe. The portal allows the electronic management of these programmes, starting from calls for proposals and proposal submission, through signature of the Grant Agreement and project reporting. It also contains a library of all legal documents, Work Programmes, and related guidelines.



[The Funding & tenders Portal for beginners](#)  (EC, 27 May 2021)



[F&T Portal Partner Search and person profile](#)  (EC, 28 Sep 2021)

[Horizon Europe NCP Portal](#)

The Portal contains useful resources developed by NCPs themselves. Newcomer NCPs can find a wide range of useful materials, such as trainings, courses, and guides, as well as a dedicated section only for officially nominated NCPs.

[European Research Executive Agency website](#)

The European Research Executive Agency (REA) manages a large part of Horizon Europe, including Cluster 3. Its website provides a good overview of the steps needed to take part in Horizon Europe, and several resources to help with proposal preparation. It also provides useful information on cross-cutting aspects, like open science and gender, and on how to manage funded projects.

[The research and innovation community platform](#)

This is a relatively newer initiative of the EC, dedicated to promoting R&I across the EU. The platform can be used to register to events, or watch the recordings/ download the presentations of previous events organized by the EC and other Agencies (on general Horizon Europe aspects, as well as thematic events).

[SEREN5 Website](#)

Our project's website has served as the primary communication channel with stakeholders for many years. The website publishes information about project activities, results, and specific details on CL3, and serves as a library for documents created within the project, which newcomer NCPs can find very useful for learning about specificities of this Cluster.


1. What are NCPs?

NCP Systems

National Contact Points (NCPs) for CL3, as well as all other areas of Horizon Europe, are appointed at a national level by the relevant national authorities, to act as representatives of Horizon Europe within the local research and innovation (R&I) community. NCPs essentially form the main interface between the European Commission (EC) and its agencies, and the applicants.

NCPs have become an essential component in the implementation of successive Framework Programmes (FP) of the European Union (EU), up the current FP, Horizon Europe. NCPs are national structures, established and financed by each of the governments of the 27 EU member states, or countries associated to Horizon Europe. NCPs are also established in many non-EU and non-associated countries ("third countries").


The NCP systems can vary from one country to another, from highly centralised to decentralised networks, and a number of very different actors may be involved, from ministries to universities, and research centres to special agencies. However, they share the common mission of providing highly professional support services and playing a key role in delivering Horizon Europe's objectives and impacts, ensuring that it becomes known and readily accessible to all potential applicants, irrespective of sector or discipline.

The contact details of the NCPs in all countries where they are established, and for all areas of Horizon Europe, are available through the [Funding & tender opportunities portal](#) .

NCP Guiding principles and Core Services

The functioning of all NCPs is governed by the "NCP Minimum Standards and Guiding Principles" agreed by all countries participating in Horizon Europe. This document outlines in detail the services expected to be provided by NCPs. In addition, it defines the cooperation between NCPs and EC services, and provides important information on the NCP nomination and recognition process, as well as confidentiality aspects and conflict of interest.



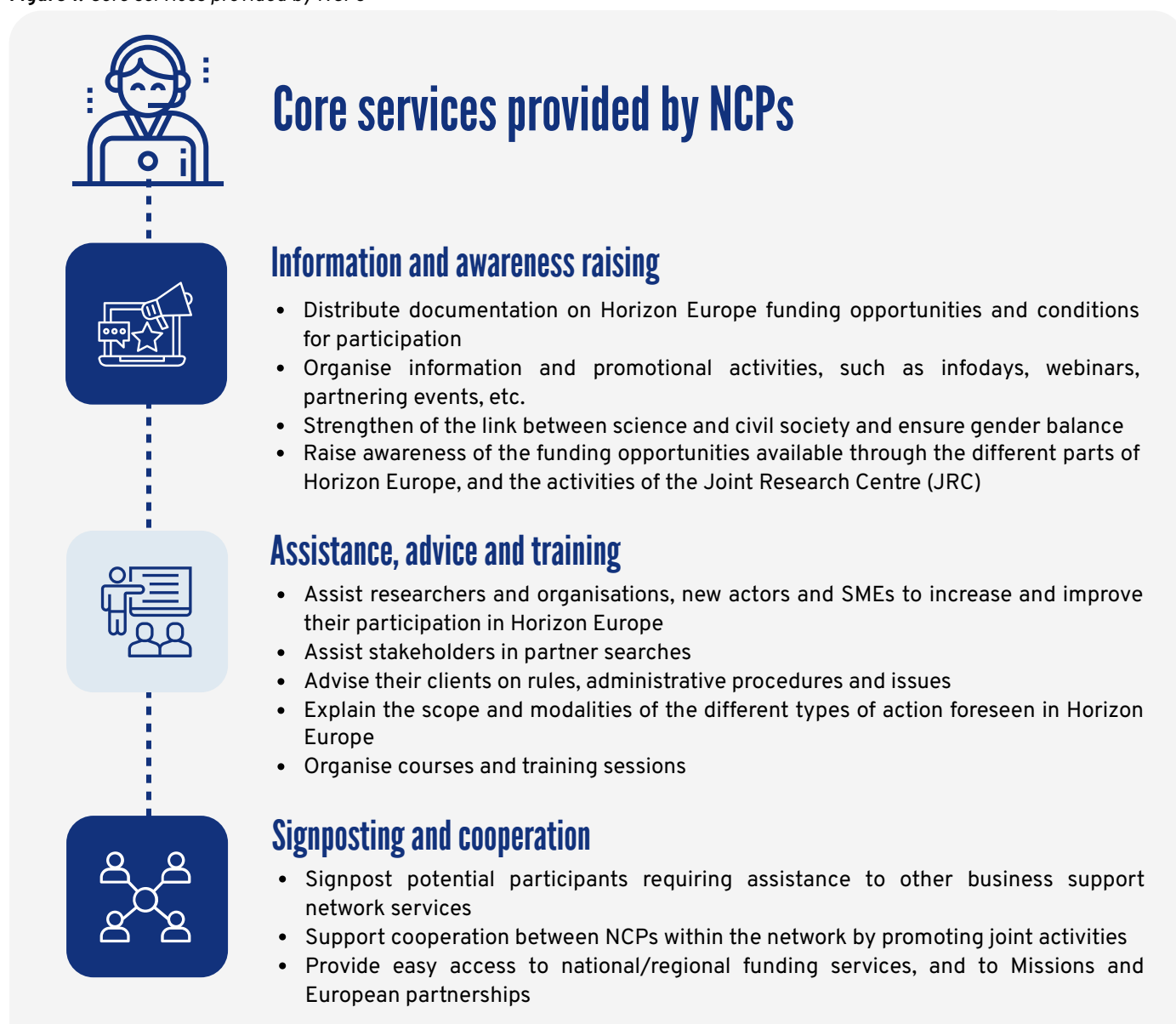
[Minimum standards and Guiding principles for setting up systems of National Contact Points \(NCP systems\) under Horizon Europe](#)  (EC)

NCPs are essentially responsible to provide information and on-the ground advice to potential applicants and beneficiaries, through the project life cycle, in their own language, in a manner that would be impossible for the EC alone. The type and level of services offered by NCPs may vary in different countries, according to the resources available and each country's specific needs. In general, the core services provided by NCPs are summarized in Figure 1.

You will be able to delve deeper into the most important practical aspects of the CL3 NCP work in Chapter 4 of this Guide.


In Chapter 5 you will be able to learn about the services offered by the SEREN5 project to help you build your capabilities as a newcomer CL3 NCP.

Figure 1: Core services provided by NCPs




You can also find some general material applicable to NCPs of any Horizon Europe area, and learn about best practices developed by other NCPs for their day-to-day work, through the following useful links:




[Welcome in Your New Life as an NCP](#) 
(Horizon Europe NCP virtual campus, account required*)



[Digital Tools for NCPs - How to make your webinars and online training more interactive](#) 
(Bridge2HE, Horizon 2020)



[Best Practices Catalogue for Horizon 2020 National Contact Points](#) 
(NCP Academy, Horizon 2020)




[Partner Search Guide](#) 
(Bridge2HE, Horizon 2020)



[Tools and Techniques to Improve NCP Service Quality](#) 
(NCP_WIDE.NET, Horizon 2020)



[NCP Interviews](#) 
(Horizon Academy, Horizon Europe)


2. An Introduction to Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's current, ninth Framework Programme for R&I, for the period 2021-2027. Horizon Europe officially began on 12 May 2021, but came into retroactive effect from 1 January 2021. It has a total budget of around EUR 95.5 billion, representing an increase of about 30% compared to its predecessor, Horizon 2020, and making it the most ambitious R&I programme in the world.

Its key objectives are:

- **Advancing scientific excellence:** Support the best researchers and innovators in Europe and beyond, fostering world-class research and innovation activities.
- **Tackling global challenges:** Address major societal challenges such as climate change, health, food security, clean energy, digital transformation, etc.
- **Boosting industrial competitiveness and innovation:** Support businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in their research and innovation efforts to enhance competitiveness and bring new products and services to the market.
- **Strengthening European partnerships:** Encourage collaboration and networking among various stakeholders from different countries, disciplines, & sectors to address complex challenges together.
- **Maximizing the impact of R&I investments:** Ensure that the results and outputs of funded projects contribute to the well-being and prosperity of European citizens and society.



[Horizon Europe – about the Programme](#)  (Horizon Europe NCP virtual campus)



[Horizon Europe glossary](#)  (Bridge2HE, Horizon 2020)

The first Strategic Plan: 2024-2027

One major key novelty of the new framework programme was the introduction of the strategic planning process. The first Horizon Europe strategic plan covered the first four years (2021-2024) of the framework programme, and its purpose was to set out overarching strategic orientations for EU research and innovation investments over this period.

The Horizon Europe Strategic plan 2021-2024 was developed by the European Commission through a co-design process that took place over the summer and autumn of 2019, and it was published in February 2021.

Its overall aim is to ensure an effective interface between EU policy priorities, and programme activities and ultimately, the research and innovation projects funded by Horizon Europe. The intention is to stimulate research and innovation investments where they are most needed to address pressing global challenges, and, most importantly, deliver results.

Thus, the strategic plan defined four **key strategic orientations** (KSOs) for EU research and innovation for the period 2021-2024, in response to the political

priorities and recovery plan of the EU. Each of the key strategic orientations encompasses **three to four cross-cutting impact areas**, which in turn link to a number of **expected impacts**. The expected impacts are structured by the six clusters that make up Horizon Europe's second Pillar, 'Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness', and cover a wide range of social, economic, ecological and scientific aspirations. In turn, each expected impact serves as the foundation for a corresponding destination in the relevant work programme parts.

For Cluster 3, four expected impacts were defined in the Strategic Plan, which are expected to support in particular two of the KSOs of the plan and 4 impact areas associated to them (see also Chapter 3).

The second Strategic Plan: 2025-2027

The start of the second Horizon Europe strategic planning process was officially launched during the European Research & Innovation Days in September 2022.

Like its predecessor, the Strategic Plan 2025-2027 will be co-designed with input from citizens and stakeholders. The Strategic Plan 2025-2027 was also covered in the largest ever public online consultation of Horizon Europe, which remained open for 12 from December 2022 to February 2023. The Strategic Plan will be drafted with early involvement and extensive exchanges with EU Member States and extensive exchanges with the European Parliament, and is expected to be adopted in 2024.



[Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024](#) 



[Strategic Plan webpage](#) 

A Brief History of ... the Framework Programmes

The European Framework Programmes (FPs) for Research and Innovation are the European Union's (EU) main instruments for implementing its common scientific and innovation policy.

The early beginnings of EU research policy can be traced back to the 1950s. Economic and political objectives linked to the control of energy sources during that period, namely coal and nuclear energy, were at the root of the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951 and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) in 1958. The treaties establishing these communities included the development of the first research and technology programmes at Community level.

The involvement of the EU in research activities outside the coal and nuclear fields began in the 1970s with the adoption by the Council of the first Community research programmes. These were adopted one by one as the need for research in a specific area at European level emerged.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the European Commission proposed the framework programme (FP) for research as a strategic tool to manage the adoption of research programmes in a more coherent way. Although no Treaty articles provided a clear legal basis for the adoption of these programmes, the first framework programme (FP1) was adopted in 1983.

The Single European Act of 1986 introduced research as a Community competence in the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, and provided a firm legal basis for the adoption of the following FPs. FP2 and FP3 were adopted in 1987 and 1990, respectively, with increased budgets.

The Treaty of Maastricht, which entered into force in 1993, modified the legal basis for the adoption of FPs, transforming them into financial tools for EU research activities. It also broadened the range of topics for which research programmes could be conducted by the EU. With FP4 and FP5, adopted in 1994 and 1998, respectively, the scope of the FP was enlarged and the focus on pre-competitive research was abandoned for an approach that would see the FP addressing societal challenges and supporting a wider range of activities in the innovation process.

The development of the European Research Area concept in 2000 marked a clear shift in the evolution of the FP. FP6 and FP7, adopted in 2002 and 2006, respectively, were designed to implement this EU research policy, which aimed to address the fragmentation of the European research landscape. The adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy and the Innovation Union flagship initiative in 2010 influenced the structure of FP8, which was adopted in 2013 and named "Horizon 2020".


As the FP evolved, the instruments used for its implementation diversified. The initial grants for transnational cooperative research projects were complemented, among others, by the development of public-to-public and public-to-private partnerships, the establishment of new structures such as the European Research Council (ERC) and the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT), specific instruments for SME support, and individual mobility grants. With Horizon 2020 the FP became a programme of programmes covering all aspects of the innovation process and implementing various EU policies.



[EU framework programmes for research and innovation](#)  (European Parliament, Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services)

Programme Structure

Horizon Europe is structured around three main pillars and one horizontal part (Figure 2). Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society is one of the 6 thematic clusters forming the major part of Pillar II: Global Challenges & European Industrial Competitiveness.

You can find out more about the programme structure in the [Horizon Europe website](#) .


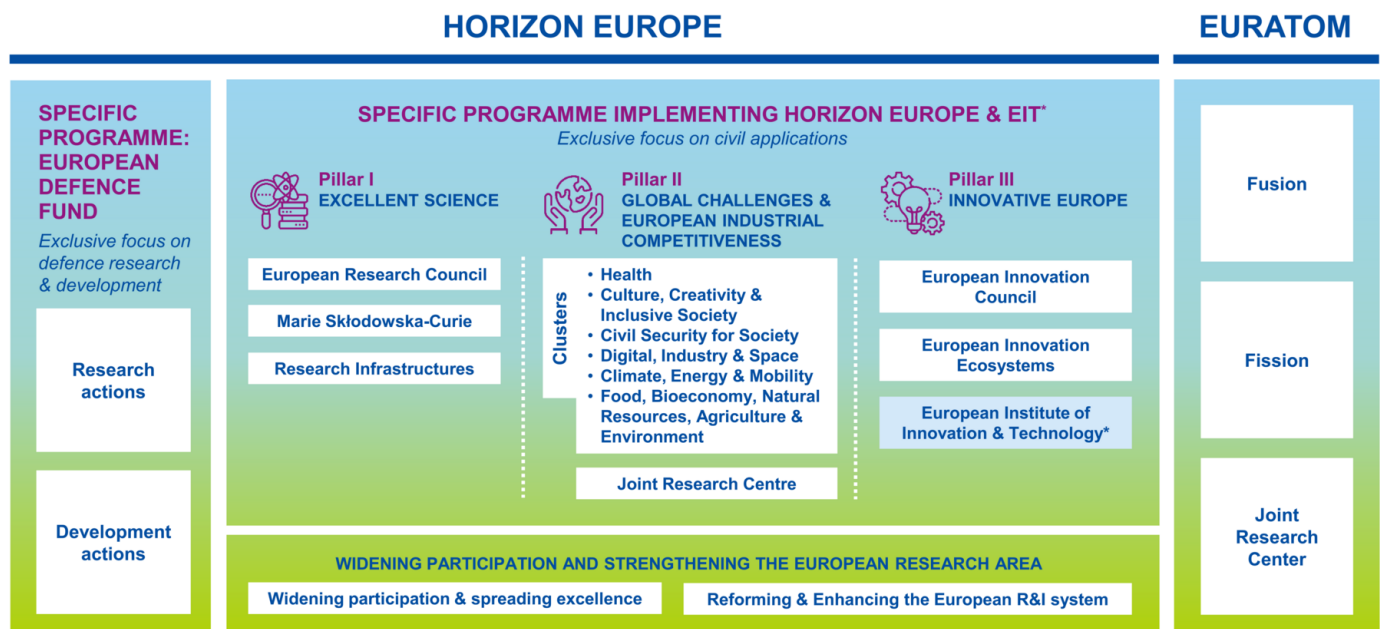
In addition, you could join one of the future info days organized by the EC, or watch the recordings from past events, available in the database of the EC's [research and innovation community platform](#) .

Figure 2: Horizon Europe Programme Structure



* The European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT) is not part of the Specific Programme



Work Programmes

Work programmes (WP) are detailed documents adopted by the European Commission, that set out the funding opportunities under Horizon Europe. The Work Programmes outline the specific funding opportunities available for a defined period, and provide essential information to potential applicants about the conditions of specific topics, funding mechanisms, and evaluation criteria for each call for proposals.


The main Work Programme of Horizon Europe is adopted on a usually two-year basis. For the period 2021-2022, it was adopted on 16 June 2021, while for the period 2023-2024 on 6 December 2022.

The **main Work Programme** of Horizon Europe includes the following areas:

- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and Research Infrastructures under Pillar I
- all Clusters under Pillar II
- European Innovation Ecosystems under Pillar III
- the 'Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area' part

Separate work programmes are also adopted for the:

- European Research Council (ERC)
- Joint Research Centre (JRC)
- European Innovation Council (EIC)

You can find all Horizon Europe Work Programmes in the [Reference Documents](#)  section of the Funding and tender opportunities portal.

General Introduction to the WP

The main Work Programme is preceded by a "General Introduction", which presents the main features of the Work Programme, and its structure into Calls for Proposals, Destinations and Topics, linking them to the policy priorities of the EU, and explaining the various terms used in this context. The General Introduction also describes how the whole Work Programme is expected to deliver on EU policy priorities, as well as the Horizon Europe Strategic Plan. Finally, it provides a summary of the EU Missions, and outlines cross-cutting aspects relevant to all Work Programme parts. Therefore NCPs may find it useful to consult this document, to obtain a good overview of the Programme.



[General Introduction, Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024](#) 

General Annexes to the WP

The Main Work Programme closes with the "General Annexes", which outline the:

- admissibility and eligibility conditions, and the criteria for financial and operational capacity and exclusion (Annexes A-C)
- award criteria, mandatory documents and evaluation procedure (Annexes D-F)
- legal and financial set-up of the grant agreements (Annex G)
- specific conditions applying to actions which include pre-commercial procurement or procurement of innovative solutions (Annex H)



[General Annexes, Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2024](#) 

Horizon Europe Programme Guide

Complementary information to the Work Programme, and further guidance on the participation procedure is also provided in the Horizon Europe Programme Guide. The purpose of the Guide is to help participants understand the programme and its calls, by avoiding technical vocabulary and legal jargon. The Programme Guide provides detailed guidance on the structure, budget and political priorities and other relevant background of the Horizon Europe programme relevant for preparing proposals.




[Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#) 

Other Complementary Documents

Other documents that provide clarifications and may be useful for applicants during proposal preparation, but also for NCPs when consulting clients, include:

[List of Participating Countries in HE](#) : Describes the different categories of countries that can take part in Horizon Europe and the cases in which they are eligible to receive EU funding.

[Online Manual](#) : outlines the procedures to register and submit proposals online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, and recommendations on preparing proposals.

[Annotated Grant Agreement \(AGA\)](#) : contains detailed annotations on the provisions in the grant agreement to be signed following proposal approval to obtain a grant.

Further Guidance

Horizon Europe is a large and complex programme, and if you are a complete newcomer, it will certainly take some homework to get acquainted with its various aspects, rules and procedures. Some useful material to help you with the process have been collected below:

Proposal Preparation



[Participants in HE projects](#)

(Horizon Europe NCP virtual campus)



[From topic idea to proposal](#)

[submission](#) (Horizon Europe NCP virtual campus)



[Bridge2HE Annotated RIA/IA](#)

[Template](#) (Bridge2HE, Horizon 2020)



[Training on Horizon Europe proposal writing](#) (Bridge2HE, 16-17 Sep 2021)



[How to prepare a successful proposal in Horizon Europe](#) (EC, 24 March 2021)



[A successful proposal for Horizon Europe: Scientific-technical excellence is key, but don't forget the other aspects](#) (EC, 21 April 2021)

Proposal Evaluation



[Standard briefing slides for HE experts](#) (EC)



[Briefing videos for HE experts](#) (EC)



[Blind evaluations in Horizon Europe](#) (EC, 28 February 2023)

Cross-cutting Aspects



[Opportunities for Researchers from the Social Sciences and Humanities \(SSH\) in Horizon Europe](#) (Net4Society, Horizon Europe)



[Ethics & Security](#) (Bridge2HE, 5 May 2022)



[The Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe: Who is concerned? How to comply with it?](#) (EC, 23 June 2022)



[Integrating Social Sciences and Humanities in Horizon Europe](#) (Bridge2HE, 26 May 2021)



[Open Science, Science communication and citizen science](#) (Bridge2HE, 18 May 2021)



[Ethics in Research and Research Integrity](#) (Horizon Europe NCP virtual campus, account required*)

Legal & Financial



[Horizon Europe Coordinators' Day: Grant Agreement Preparation](#) (EC, 2 February 2023)




[Horizon Europe Coordinators' Day: Grant Management](#) (EC, 8 June 2023)




[DESCA \(Model Consortium Agreement\) for Horizon Europe](#) (Bridge2HE, 25 Apr 2022)

Lump Sum



[Lump Sum Funding in Horizon Europe: How does it work? How to write a proposal?](#)  (EC, 11 May 2023)



[Training on Lump Sum Project Funding](#)  (Bridge2HE, 30 Nov 2021)

Dissemination, Exploitation & Communication




[Communicating about your EU-funded project webpage](#) 




[Dissemination and exploitation webpage](#) 




[Dissemination & Exploitation in Horizon Europe](#)  (EC, 9 June 2021)



[Exploitation, Dissemination, Communication, incl. Business plan and DMP in proposals](#)  (Bridge2HE, 4 May 2021)



[Horizon Results Booster - steering research towards a strong societal impact](#)  (EC, 24 May 2023)



[Horizon Results Platform](#)  (Bridge2HE, 23 Nov 2021)



[IP in Horizon Europe](#)  (Bridge2HE, 19 May 2022)

3. Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society

Introduction

EU civil security research aims to provide innovations, modern technologies and data to governments, EU and national authorities, businesses and researchers, on topics of strategic importance for Europe's security. These range from fighting crime and terrorism, to strengthening external border management, ensuring EU's cybersecurity, and helping European society get ready for disasters due to climate change.

Under Horizon Europe, civil security research is funded through Cluster 3, one of the six clusters within Horizon Europe Pillar II: Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness.

The challenges to which CL3 projects are expected to contribute to, include for example the threats of terrorism and crime within the EU, which still remain serious, as well as cyber-attacks, that require coordinated responses and novel concepts. In addition, there is a need for improved protection and

Figure 3: EU political priorities supported by Cluster 3

EU Political Priorities

A main focus of [EU civil security research](#) is to form one of the building blocks of the [Security Union Strategy](#). In particular, research in Cluster 3 supports the following specific policies:



[fighting crime](#) and [terrorism](#) (including [organised crime](#) and [cybercrime](#))



[border management](#) (including [customs security](#) and [maritime security](#))



[resilient infrastructure](#)



[cybersecurity](#) (including [security of network and information systems](#) and [certification](#))



[disaster-resilient societies](#) (including against [chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear \(CBRN\)](#) incidents; climate-related risks and extreme events; geological disasters; pandemics)

resilience of physical and digital infrastructures, as well as of vital societal functions. Meanwhile, irregular migration, together with an overall increase of legal movements of persons and goods, are requiring new technological solutions for better integrated border management. Disasters, both natural or man-made, call for better preparation to prevent and reduce the loss of life, harm to health and the environment, economic and material damage. At the same time, climate change is likely to exacerbate security challenges outside of disaster events, and lessons need to be learnt from the COVID-19 crisis both in terms of preparedness and capacity building for crises, and in improving responses to cross-sectoral aspects of such events.


Cluster 3, therefore, has the vision to support wider EU responses to those security challenges, while ensuring free movement and protecting the integrity of the Schengen area. This means supporting 'a resilient and more stable Europe that protects' as well as supporting a competitive European civil security industry sector. As the above challenges are rapidly evolving, and social and technological developments are making a response increasingly complex, security research can serve as a tool to move from a reactive approach to security to a proactive approach based on foresight, prevention and anticipation.

Policy background

A clearer perspective on the background leading to the development of the Cluster 3 Work Programme, can be provided by the EU political priorities it seeks to support (Figure 3). Given the overarching content of the Cluster, several Directorates General (DG) of the European Commission are involved in the design of the Work Programmes and Calls for Proposals: Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) and Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT). The Directorate General for Research & Innovation (DG RTD) is also involved, since it's responsible among others for the implementation of the Framework Programme.

Cluster 3 in the HE Strategic Plan 2021-24

In line with the above political priorities, the [Strategic](#)

[Plan 2021-24](#)  has defined four impacts expected to be achieved through Cluster 3 funding:

(i) Losses from natural, accidental and man-made disasters are reduced through enhanced disaster risk reduction based on preventive actions, better societal preparedness, and resilience and improved disaster risk management in a systemic way.

(ii) Legitimate passengers and shipments travel more easily into the EU, while illicit trades, trafficking, piracy, terrorist and other criminal acts are prevented, thanks to improved air, land and sea border management and maritime security including better knowledge on social factors.

(iii) Crime and terrorism are more effectively tackled, while respecting fundamental rights, and resilience and autonomy of physical and digital infrastructures are enhanced and vital societal functions are ensured, thanks to more powerful prevention, preparedness and response, a better understanding of related human, societal and technological aspects, and the development of cutting-edge capabilities for police authorities and infrastructure operators, including measures against cybercrime.

(iv) Increased cybersecurity and a more secure online environment by developing and using effectively EU and Member States' capabilities in digital technologies supporting protection of data and networks aspiring to technological sovereignty in this field, while respecting privacy and other fundamental rights; this should contribute to secure services, processes and products, as well as to robust digital infrastructures capable to resist and counter cyber-attacks and hybrid threats.

Work Programmes 2021-22 and 2023-24

To achieve the expected impacts set out in the Strategic Plan, the Calls for Proposals and topics in the Work Programmes 2021-22 and 2023-24 of Cluster 3 have in turn been structured into six Destinations (Figure 4)

The Horizon Europe main Work Programme 2021-2022, including the Cluster 3 part, was adopted on 16 June 2021. It included one Call for Proposals per

Figure 4: Cluster 3 Work Programme Destinations

Work Programme Destinations

The Work Programmes of Cluster 3 in Horizon Europe are structured into six Destinations

1
FCT

Better protect the EU and its citizens against Crime and Terrorism

Crime and terrorism are more effectively tackled, while respecting fundamental rights, thanks to more powerful prevention, preparedness and response, a better understanding of related human, societal and technological aspects, and the development of cutting-edge capabilities for police authorities, including cybercrime.

2
BM

Effective management of EU external borders

Legitimate passengers and shipments travel more easily into the EU, while illicit trades, trafficking, piracy, terrorist and other criminal acts are prevented, due to improved air, land and sea border management and maritime security including better knowledge on social factors.

3
INFRA

Resilient Infrastructure

Resilience and autonomy of physical and digital infrastructures are enhanced and vital societal functions are ensured, thanks to more powerful prevention, preparedness and response, a better understanding of related human, societal and technological aspects, and cutting-edge capabilities for infrastructure operators.

4
CS

Increased Cybersecurity

Increased cybersecurity and a more secure online environment, by developing EU's capabilities in digital technologies, supporting protection of data and networks, while respecting privacy and other fundamental rights; contributing to secure services, processes and products, and to robust digital infrastructures.

5
DRS

A Disaster-Resilient Society for Europe

Losses from natural, accidental and human-made disasters are reduced through enhanced disaster risk reduction based on preventive actions, better societal preparedness, and resilience and improved disaster risk management in a systemic way.

6
SSRI

Strengthened Security Research and Innovation

This Destination includes a number of cross-cutting R&I actions that will support horizontally all of the expected impacts of the other five Destinations, by: (i) generating knowledge and value in cross-cutting matters; (ii) supporting innovation uptake and go-to-market strategies.

Destination per year, with an overall number of 64 topics for and a total budget of €428 million. The last open calls from Work Programme 2021-2022 had a deadline on 23 November 2022.

The main Work Programme 2023-2024 was adopted on 6 December 2022. However, due to ongoing

discussions between the European Commission and Member States regarding the reduction of budget imposed to Cluster 3 for contribution to the European Chips Act, an amendment to the main Horizon Europe Work Programme was adopted on 31 March 2023, allocating an additional €50 million to the Cluster 3 Work Programme.

Like the previous one, Work Programme 2023-2024 includes one Call for Proposals per Destination per year. For 2023, all the Calls for Proposals opened on 29 Jun 2023 and had a deadline on 23 Nov 2023. They included in total 23 topics and had an overall budget of €174.2 million.

For 2024, all the Calls will be launched on 27 Jun 2024, with a deadline on 20 Nov 2024. The [forthcoming calls](#) include 25 topics with a total budget of €193.6 million.



[Cluster 3 Website](#)



[DG Home Website](#)



[DG CNCT Website](#)



[Horizon Europe Cluster 3 Info-day Recordings](#) (EC and SEREN5, 27 Jun 2023)





[Making EU countries more secure](#) (Factsheet, EC)

4. Practical Aspects of the CL3 NCP Daily Work


Communication with the EC


Within the EC, the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) is responsible for the nomination process of Horizon Europe NCPs. Unit F.2: Innovation & Security Research in the Directorate-General for Migration & Home Affairs (DG HOME) is responsible for the management and coordination of the CL3 NCP Network.

The functional mailbox to communicate with the CL3 NCP coordinator is HOME-SECURITY-RESEARCH-HELPDESK@ec.europa.eu.

Another major communication tool with the EC is via the [CIRCABC platform](#) . CIRCABC (Collaborative and Information Resources Centre for Administration, Businesses and Citizens) is a web-based platform, which enables EU to share documents, information and resources with specific groups in private workspaces. Access to CIRCABC is provided via the [EU Login account](#) , and officially nominated NCPs will be given access to the Civil Security for Society NCP group. The group library provides access to documents from the official NCP meetings, evaluation results, and other.



Resolving queries

Questions or requests for clarifications regarding specific CL3 topics can be submitted to the Research Enquiry Service via the following [webform](#) . In general, the Research Enquiry Service answers questions about EU Research Programmes and can be used by anyone, however questions submitted by NCPs are prioritized.

The funding and tender opportunities portal also includes a dedicated [FAQ page](#) , which is updated with the answers to the most frequent questions that have been submitted to the Research Enquiry Service. FAQs relevant to CL3 can be found by searching the FAQ page, but also within a specific topic's page, under "Topic related FAQ".

NCP Meetings

DG HOME, in collaboration with DG CNCT, organize CL3 NCP Meetings in Brussels (or online), usually once per year (in June, close to the opening of the Calls for Proposals), to provide up to date information to all NCPs. The aim of these meetings is to highlight features of upcoming calls, analyse statistics on previous calls, and provide an opportunity to CL3 NCPs to ask questions or request clarifications. The latest NCP Meeting was held in Brussels on 26 June 2023, and all the presentations are available via CIRCABC.

NCPs are notified by e-mail about the meeting but need to access their invitation and manage their participation through the [AGM tool](#)  ("Advanced Gateway to your Meetings"), an online platform for the organization of expert meetings in the European Commission. Access is provided using the EU Login account ([Two-Factor Authentication](#)  required).


The EC reimburses the travel costs for participation to the meetings of one NCP per country for Member States (MS) and Associated Countries (AC), but not third countries. The detailed reimbursement rules are provided through AGM together with the invitation to the meetings.

Other events

Apart from NCP meetings, several other events related to security research are organized by the EC or other agencies/networks. The focus of these events is often on stakeholders, but NCPs may also find it beneficial to take part, to stay up-to-date with policy developments, or network with EC officials and stakeholders. Some examples include:

Cluster 3 Infoday & Brokerage Event

SEREN5, in collaboration with the EC and REA organizes in Brussels a European CL3 infoday, aimed to inform stakeholders about upcoming CL3 Calls. A brokerage event is also organized in conjunction with the infoday, focusing on gathering potential applicants interested in preparing projects and building consortia for the open calls, thus enhancing international cooperation in CL3.

The 2023 infoday and Brokerage event took place on 27-28 June 2023 and the recordings and presentations from both days are available through the event [website](#) .


SMI2G Brokerage Event

The Security Mission Information & Innovation Group (SMI2G) brokerage event gathers European-wide innovators and practitioners who are looking for further consortium partners, by presenting game-changing ideas and novel technologies addressing the challenges of the CL3 Work Programme. Every year, SMI2G hosts top-level keynote speakers, expert panel discussions as well as ground-breaking pitch sessions related to the respective calls. The event offers participants significant networking opportunities, supporting consortium building efforts and the sharing of valuable information concerning the Horizon Europe Security Calls.


In 2023, the [SMI2G event](#)  took place in Paris on 10-11 May.


Security Research Event

The Security Research Event (SRE) is an annual meeting where industry, policy makers and knowledge institutions come together to discuss the state of play and current challenges for security research in Europe.

[SRE 2023](#)  took place during the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU and was prepared and organised with support of Sweden and Spain. It took place in Brussels on 24-25 October 2023, and featured two days of Conferences with thematic sessions; an Exhibition presenting projects, their achievements, and small-scale demonstrations; and the Security Innovation Award Ceremony.

CERIS events

Aiming to facilitate interactions within the security research community and users of research outputs, in 2014 the EC established the Community of Users for Safe, Secure and Resilient Societies (CoU), which gathered around 1,500 registered stakeholders (policy makers, end-users, academia, industry and civil society). The CoU has now been renamed as the [Community for European Research and Innovation for Security \(CERIS\)](#) .

Among its other activities, CERIS regularly organizes [thematic events](#)  with the security research community, that enable the exchange of information on innovative methods and solutions, and which are also often open to decision-makers and citizens.

Information about funded projects and country participation

[CORDIS](#)

The Community Research and Development Information Service (CORDIS) is the EC's primary database of results from the projects funded by the EU's framework programmes, from FP1 to Horizon Europe. CORDIS hosts a rich and structured public repository with project information, such as factsheets, participants, reports, deliverables and links to open-access publications. In addition, CORDIS produces its own range of publications and articles to make it easier for users to find relevant results.

CORDIS can be very useful for NCPs, for example to find organizations from their countries who have taken part in previously funded security projects, or help their clients identify partners in specific research areas. They can also use it to get an idea about the objectives and outcomes of projects which have already been funded in specific areas, to get a better understanding about the background of open topics and the results on which they are expected to build upon.



[A 5-minute introduction to CORDIS](#) 


[Horizon Dashboard](#)

Another useful tool to explore data on participation and funded projects in the framework programmes is the Horizon Dashboard.

The Horizon Dashboard is an interactive knowledge platform offering user-friendly and public access to statistics and data on EU research and innovation. It offers easy access to information on proposals, funded projects and project results, notably reported IPRs and scientific publications.

It also allows to use intuitive functions for filtering and drilling down, allowing analysis by geographical location, research thematic area, organization types, and many other variables, as well as functions for data export, story-building and bookmarking.



[Horizon Dashboard Platform](#) ,
(Bridge2HE, 7-8 Dec 2021)



[Horizon Dashboard Quick Guide](#) 

NCP Network Projects

As described in Chapter 1, NCPs are national structures, which are established and financed by each of the Member States and Associated Countries, and in some cases third countries. Consequently, the structure and operation of the NCP systems can highly vary from one country to another, with NCPs with different skills and levels of experience being involved in different countries. Although the NCPs are in direct communication with the EC, and they have the opportunity to take part in activities centrally organized by the EC (e.g. NCP meetings, etc.), the EC aims to complement these interactions by providing funding to the NCP network projects.


For example, as described in Chapter 5, the current network project for CL3 NCPs is SEREN5. Similarly,

several other ongoing projects also cover most other parts of Horizon Europe, as detailed in Figure 5. These projects are funded through specific topics included in the Work Programmes of the corresponding Horizon Europe areas, and only officially nominated national support structures are eligible to take part. The funded projects can last for the whole 7-year duration of the framework programme, but in some cases, they cover shorter periods.

The aim of these NCP projects is, among others, to improve and professionalise the NCP services so that they are consistent across Europe, and to further develop the NCPs' knowledge, experience and skills, in particular to lower the entry barriers for newcomers. This way, the EC aims to achieve an increased average quality of the proposals submitted to the various Calls for Proposals. In addition, the


NCP projects seek to develop a harmonised and improved transnational cooperation between all NCPs, regardless of whether they take part in the implementation of the project.

To that end, the NCP projects organize a wide range of activities and produce material that can be beneficial to NCPs, as well as their clients. These may include for example activities for the capacity building and competence development of NCPs (e.g. trainings, mentoring schemes, etc.), as well as events and services available to all relevant stakeholders (e.g. infodays, brokerage events, trainings, etc.). Cluster 3 NCPs can find details about the activities organized by SEREN5 in which they could take part in Chapter 5. Meanwhile, they may also benefit from activities organized by other networks, which could be relevant or complementary to their work.

Of particular interest, for example, is the network for NCP Coordinators and Legal & Financial NCPs ([Horizon Academy](#) ) , which organizes activities that cover overarching and horizontal aspects of Horizon Europe, relevant to all thematic NCPs. This network also maintains the Horizon Europe NCP

Portal, which provides access to a wide range of useful materials, such as trainings, courses, and guides, as well as a dedicated section only for officially nominated NCPs. The NCP Portal also unifies the rest of the NCP networks, by hosting microsites for each separate project.

For NCPs from Widening Countries:

[NCP_WIDERA.NET](#)  may be of particular interest, as it offers a range of services which are available to NCPs and participants, not only of the Widening & ERA part, but also of the Pillar II clusters, including CL3. These include for example:

- (i) Pre-screening portal: offers professional pre-checks of proposals to applicants from Widening Countries in Pillar II.
- (ii) Travel grants: financial support for participation of applicants from Widening countries to on-site brokerage events for Pillar II Clusters.
- (iii) Study visits: opportunities for researchers, research managers and administrators to take part in study visits in leading research institutions.

Figure 5: List of ongoing NCP Networks Projects

	Horizon Academy  NCP Coordinators and Legal & Financial NCPs		
Pillar I	MSCA-NET  Marie Skłodowska- Curie Actions	RICH EUROPE  Research Infrastructures	
Pillar II	HNN3.0  Cluster 1: Health	Net4SocietyHE  Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society	SEREN5  Cluster 3: Civil Security for Society
	IDEAL-IST  Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space - Digital part	NCP4Industry  Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space - Industry part	COSMOS4HE  Cluster 4: Digital, Industry and Space - Industry part
	GREENET  Cluster 5: Climate, Energy and Mobility	CARE4BIO  Cluster 6: Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment	NCP4Missions  EU Missions
Pillar III	Access2EIC  European Innovation Council/ European Innovation Ecosystems		
Widening	NCP_WIDERA.NET  Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area		
Euratom	NetEuratom  Euratom Research and Training Programme		

Collaboration with Programme Committee delegates

The Horizon Europe Programme Committees (PCs) have an important role in assisting the EC in the implementation of the framework programme. These Committees are composed of representatives from the EC, the EU Member States (MS) and the Horizon Europe Associated Countries (AC), in the latter case with limited voting rights. There are 14 configurations of the so-called “Committee for the Specific Programme Implementing Horizon Europe”: the Strategic configuration, and one configuration for each thematic area of the programme, including one for CL3. In the CL3 PC, the EC is represented by DG HOME, DG CNCT and DG RTD.

Similar to the rest of the thematic configurations, the main focus of the CL3 PC is the co-creation and development of the Work Programmes, as well as their strategic foundation within the Horizon Europe Strategic Plans. In addition, issues of particular importance are discussed by the PC, such as new initiatives or budget (re-)allocations that are relevant to CL3.

Each MS/AC is free to decide on the composition of its PC delegation, with no limitation on the number of appointed delegates (although a maximum of two participants is allowed to participate with physical

presence in physical/hybrid events). National delegations introduce the interests and positions of their country during the preparation phase of a new Work Programme or its revision, they exchange information and positions with the EC and other national delegations, and contribute to the discussions launched by MS/AC or the EC. They express their national opinion orally at the meetings or in written form as requested by the chair, and participate in formal voting.

Further details regarding Horizon Europe PCs can be found in the relevant [“Rules of Procedure”](#) .

Although the role of PC delegates focuses on a higher level, related to research policies and national priorities, they can have a complementary and highly interlinked role with the NCPs. Therefore, NCPs could benefit from establishing a clear communication and synergies with their national PC delegates, that could help them develop a better understanding of their national ecosystem of security research, its needs and ways to support it.

NCPs may be able to find out the composition of their national delegation through the relevant national authorities responsible for R&I. In the case of many MS/AC there is even an overlap between NCPs and PC members, with the same individuals appointed in both roles.


5. SEREN5

Tools and Services

SEREN5 is structured into five Work packages (WPs), through which a series of activities have been foreseen to empower the network of CL3 NCPs and lead to higher quality and quantity of CL3 proposals.

SEREN5 aims to involve all CL3 NCPs (including NCPs from countries not involved in the consortium). All activities aimed at capacity building will be open to all NCPs, including non-beneficiaries (e.g. trainings, fora etc.). Furthermore, non-beneficiaries will also be invited to take part in CL3 Network Meetings, where novelties or updates within the civil security area will be discussed, and input will be collected for the organization of future activities tailored to the NCPs' needs.

All CL3 NCPs receive regular e-mail communication from the project regarding the activities organized. If you believe you are not yet part of our mailing list, please get in touch with the project coordinator, Flavia La Colla (laquilla@apre.it)

You can also stay in touch through the project [website](#) .

Services for stakeholders

The wide variety of CL3 stakeholders (researchers, practitioners, law enforcement agencies etc.) can benefit from different kinds of activities developed by SEREN5 in order to support them in the process of submitting proposals, from the very early stages of the project idea creation.


SEREN5 can also concretely support applicants in the process of developing their consortia, thanks to.

the organization of Brokerage events and Pitch sessions, and the development of the SeReMa partner search tool (see below).

In order to improve the competences and skills of the stakeholders, SEREN5 periodically organizes specific trainings usually in conjunction with other major security events (such as the CL3 Infodays or the SRE). The trainings for stakeholders aim to touch upon different types of topics: horizontal issues (such as gender, IPR, ethics, etc.) or specific aspects of the proposal preparation process or the development of consortia.

Finally, another key service for stakeholders is the “Project Idea Check”: a service conceived to support applicants from the very early stage of the proposal preparation (the project idea development). Through a dedicated form designed for CL3 proposers, they will be able to lay the foundations of their proposal, address the call topic text and recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their project idea. A complete form will be a pre-condition to a 1:1 private consultation meeting with an experienced NCP, giving advice based on their experience and knowledge.

Partner Search Tool: the SeReMa Database

The purpose of the Security Research Map ([SeReMa](#) ) is to increase the visibility of security related research in Europe and to optimize the networking between research facilities, universities, public authorities, end users, suppliers of security solutions and operators of critical infrastructures.

Collaboration/Synergies with other projects

Following the importance that the European Commission puts on the concept of synergies (in the general meaning) in Horizon Europe, SEREN5 is strongly committed to collaborate with other funded projects (both other thematic NCPs networks and research and innovation projects).

Indeed, when possible, SEREN5 tries to join the efforts of organizing events for NCPs or stakeholders with other funded projects in order not to duplicate the work and in order to reinforce the synergies since the objectives and audience of different projects can be the same.

WP1 - Project coordination and management

The main goal of WP1 is to guarantee an efficient coordination of the activities and an effective management of the project (e.g. costs, time, results, risks), according to the description of action. In the framework of this WP, the project management structure will be consolidated, ensuring an efficient operational management of the project, including administrative and financial procedures, to ensure a timely delivery of the results with an adequate quality level.

WP2 - Enhancing NCPs knowledge and capacities

The main objective of WP2 is to offer training and support to all Cluster 3 NCPs. Specifically, trainings and fora aim to provide information on Cluster 3-related topics and policies, based on current and future needs of NCPs and the network. In particular, newcomer NCPs will be further supported, for example through the present Newcomers Guide, as well as a mentoring scheme aimed at reducing the knowledge gap between more- and less-experienced NCPs.

WP3 - Raising participation and quality of proposals in Cluster 3

WP3 aims to deliver activities that support and strengthen the involvement of civil security stakeholders in Cluster 3 calls for proposals. This will be achieved by: (i) providing training sessions for stakeholders to enhance their capabilities for proposal preparation, (ii) supporting networking by organizing dedicated Cluster 3 infodays and brokerage events, (iii) developing customised material and tools for stakeholders according to their specific needs.

WP4 - Networking and cooperation

WP4 aims at broadening and enriching the composition of Cluster 3 constituency, as well as strengthening and maintaining links with the other thematic NCP networks, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), and other relevant actors in the field of security R&I, such as practitioners, key security stakeholders, national players and the European Cybersecurity Competence Centre (ECCC) and network.

WP5 - Lowering barriers for newcomers and participants from widening countries

The activities of this WP target clients and potential applicants with no or low experience in Horizon Europe or previous framework programmes, and proposal preparation. Apart from newcomers, special focus will also be given to potential applicants from widening countries. This will be achieved through an identification of groups and potential ways of support. In addition, pitching and matchmaking sessions will be organised to assist these groups of applicants to find partners and build consortia.

WP6 - Dissemination and communication

This WP aims to raise awareness and increase the visibility of the project's activities, and maximise the impacts of project results. It will also focus on preparing a common visual identity for the project, creating a new website, improving outreach through social media, and increasing the visibility of EU-funded R&I projects in the area of civil security.

WP7 - Impact assessment and policy feedback

The objective of this WP is to evaluate the impact of security R&I projects and provide policy feedback to support the future of EU-funded security research. The first task will develop an Impact assessment framework to analyse the "added value" of security R&I projects for participants and practitioners. The second task aims to collect and provide policy feedback to support EU-funded security research programming.

For any questions, suggestions or feedback regarding the contents of the Guide, please get in touch with the Cluster 3 National Contact Point in Cyprus:



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